
Higher Education Committee

HB 2997

Brief Description: Enhancing higher education accountability.

Sponsors: Representative Anderson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a common student identifier used across K-12 and higher education to assist in tracking educational outcomes.
- Adds additional reporting responsibilities to those already assigned to the education data center at the Office of Financial Management.
- Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to track specific direct and indirect higher education costs.
- Requires the HECB to develop and publish a higher education consumer report card.

Hearing Date: 1/30/08

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304).

Background:

Higher Education Data Collection

Section 3 of E2SSB 5843 established an "education data center" in the Office of Financial Management (OFM). The education data center, which uses the working title of "Education Research and Data Center (ERDC)," in collaboration with the Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program (LEAP) committee, conducts analyses of early learning, K-12, and higher education programs and education issues across the P-20 system. The system includes the Department of Early Learning, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Professional Educator Standards Board, the State Board of Education, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board,

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the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), and public and private non-profit higher education institutions. The ERDC also works with other agencies that have significant roles in conducting and supporting education research – the Employment Security Department, the Department of Information Services, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee, and the Washington Institute for Public Policy.

Education Cost Study

Every four years, the HECB publishes an Education Cost Study, using data provided directly from the four-year institutions and the community and technical college system. The data is based on expenditures from state appropriations and tuition revenue. The four-year institutions report on instructional costs by discipline for both undergraduate and graduate levels of study. The community and technical college system reports instructional costs for subject areas and by type of program (academic, basic skills, and workforce). Direct costs reported in the Education Cost Study include salaries and benefits of instructional faculty and staff, personnel who directly support the faculty, and supplies and equipment. Indirect costs reported include admissions, registration, some student services, libraries, administration, facilities and maintenance.

Accountability

Current law directs the HECB to develop an accountability monitoring and reporting system, and to publish achievements on the performance measures in the accountability monitoring and reporting system. The current accountability framework was adopted by the HECB and OFM in December 2006, and includes performance targets related to degree production at the Associate's, Bachelor's and graduate levels, high demand Bachelor's degree production, graduation rates, freshman retention, and the percentage of Bachelor's degree recipients not exceeding 125 percent of the number of credits required for the degree. Two-year system performance measures also include numbers of students reaching a defined benchmark in each of its three mission areas academic transfer programs, workforce development programs, and basic skills.

Summary of Bill:

Higher Education Data Center

In addition to the duties previously assigned in 2007, the ERDC will implement a common student identification number used within K-12 and higher education to assist in tracking educational outcomes. Additional outcome reporting measures are added including: (1) application acceptance rates; (2) entrance placement examination scores; (3) program-specific acceptance rates; (4) financial aid award per student including loans; (5) freshman-to-sophomore student retention rates; (6) four, five, and six-year graduation rates; (7) average time to degree; (8) employment rates in general fields of study.

Cost Accounting

The HECBs direct and indirect cost accounting responsibilities will include:

- cost per enrolled undergraduate and graduate student;
- cost per undergraduate and graduate degree;
- cost per degree by field of study;
- pre-college remediation costs;
- all financial aid and institutional aid per student;

- average faculty, administrator, and classified staff salaries including those funded by state monies and monies from other sources;
- percentage of budget spent on faculty, administration, and staff; and
- cost per student for support services.

Cost studies shall be submitted to the Governor's office and Legislature, every two years, beginning December 1, 2008.

Education Consumer Report Card

The HECB will develop and publish a consumer report card that provides data for consumers of higher education to assess educational quality. The information in the report card will emphasize the nature of the learning environment. It will include the data collected through the education research and data center, as well as information on student and faculty engagement, instructor qualifications, teaching and learning assessment practices, faculty availability and employment status, and related institutional resources such as student services available. Freshman and seniors attending public Baccalaureate degree-granting institutions at least part-time will be assessed on the scores on the collegiate learning assessment or college level examination program tests, and their average scores will be included in the report card.

The consumer report card must be submitted to the higher education and fiscal committees of the Legislature by December 15, 2009 and every two years thereafter.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.